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THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Letter dated 16 May 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 14 May 1997 by the Presidency of the European Union on the preservation of the Afghan cultural heritage.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 39.

(Signed) N. H. BIEGMAN
Permanent Representative of the
Netherlands to the United Nations

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ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

Statement issued on 14 May 1997 by the Presidency of the European Union on the preservation of the Afghan cultural heritage

The European Union is deeply concerned about threats made by certain representatives of the Taliban side to blow up the "Blind Buddhas of Bamiyan" which are silent witnesses of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage of incalculable archaeological value.

The European Union deplores the destruction of archaeological sites and historical monuments.

The European Union warmly welcomes the recent assurances of leading representatives of the Taliban that the two Buddhist monuments will not be destroyed.

The European Union would like to recall the Convention of 16 November 1972 concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. As a State party to that Convention, Afghanistan has recognized its primary duty to ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of, inter alia, the cultural heritage situated on its territory.

In the context of that Convention, the European Union firmly appeals to all Afghan parties to take appropriate steps to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against the cultural property of the Afghan nation.